

21. Landscape and Buffer Requirements

(See zoning ordinance [§ 78-503](#), Site Landscaping, and [§ 78-504](#), Open Space)

The Town of Herndon Zoning Ordinance User Guide series provides the public with general information on land use regulations affecting activities undertaken by the public and administered by the Herndon Department of Community Development. It is not intended to be a complete statement of all applicable regulations. Individuals are encouraged to contact the Department of Community Development at community.development@herndon-va.gov or 703-787-7380 for complete permitting requirements.

Why does the town regulate landscaping?

The town seeks to enhance the quality of life in the Town, protect the environment, reduce storm water runoff, and protect property values by regulating the planting, maintenance and preservation of trees, shrubs and other plants. To help meet this objective, the Town also requires a certain percentage of open space for certain uses in all zoning districts. The open space can consist of landscaped areas and most outdoor recreational uses. The town provides design standards for open space and for landscaping.

What is a landscape plan?

Any development proposed within the town is subject to the town's landscape and buffer requirements and requires detailed review through a Site Plan review process. Prior to making site improvements, a development applicant must apply to the town for approval. Part of the application process involves submitting a landscape plan that shows trees that exist on the site, trees to be saved, detailed information about proposed plantings, and methods of proposed irrigation and drainage. To be approved, the landscape plan must meet all town requirements for buffers and landscaping.

What is a buffer?

A buffer is an area of land that separates land uses of different character and is intended to mitigate negative impacts of the more intense use on a less intense use or vacant parcel. The buffer area typically includes landscaping, berms, walls, fences, setbacks and required yards. Buffers are typically required along the property line to protect adjoining properties.

Who is responsible for providing a buffer?

Generally, a developer or builder is responsible for installing the required landscaping at the time of site development. Afterward, the landowner is responsible for maintaining the landscape materials. If the landscaped area is within common area owned by a homeowner's association, the association is responsible for maintaining the landscaping in accordance with town requirements.

What are the buffer requirements?

In residential districts, the buffer width along public rights-of-way is 10 feet and must contain at least one canopy tree every 35 feet. In commercial districts and industrial districts, the buffer width along public rights-of-way is 25 feet and must contain at least one canopy tree every 35 feet.

Section [78-503.4\(b\)](#) contains more detail about the requirements.

The width of the buffer along property lines that are not adjacent to a public right-of-way depends on surrounding land uses. For example, a non-residential use is required to have a wider buffer when it abuts a residential use. The most narrow width allowed under any circumstances is 7.5 feet, and the widest is 25 feet. Within these buffers, there are four possible landscape configurations: Class A, Class B, Class C, or Class D, as shown in the chart below.

How are the landscape buffer classes used?

Example One: An owner of a prospective convenience store wants to locate the store in the CS, *Commercial Service* zoning district, adjacent to land that is in the R-10, *Residential* zoning district. The convenience store

property would be required to include a Landscape Buffer Class “D” of 15 feet in width along the boundary shared with the *R-10* property. Within the Buffer Class “D”, the developer would be required to place one canopy tree every 40 linear feet, plus one evergreen tree every 40 feet, plus a masonry wall of six feet in height.

Example Two: The developer of a prospective office building wants to locate the building in the *O&LI, Office and Light Industrial* zoning district, adjacent to land that is in the *PD-B, Planned Development - Business* zoning district. The office building property would be required to

include a Landscape Buffer Class “E” of 7.5 feet in width along the boundary shared with the *PD-B* property. Within the Buffer Class “E”, the developer would be required to place one canopy tree every 40 linear feet, and evergreen shrubs planted 3’ on center. If the developer chooses to provide a fence, it must permit maximum visibility between the *O&LI* property and the *PD-B* property.

Type and Amount of Landscape Material Required When Not Adjacent to Public Rights-of Way				
Landscape Buffer Class	Average Number of Canopy Trees per Linear Feet of Property Boundary	Average Number of Evergreen Trees per Linear Feet of Property Boundary	Average Number of Under story or Ornamental or Under Story Trees per Linear Feet of Property Boundary	Fence*
A	1 per 30	1 per 30	1 per 50	Six-foot tall fence.
B	1 per 25	1 per 25	1 per 50, plus one shrub per every three linear feet	Six foot tall masonry wall.
C	1 per 25	1 per 25	1 per 50	Masonry wall of six feet in height.
D	1 per 30	1 per 30	1 per 50	Permitted, with maximum visibility between properties and a design that discourages climbing.
<p>*When the required wall or fence is pre-existing on the abutting property, then by written agreement with the owner or owner’s designee of the abutting property, an average of one additional evergreen or canopy tree every 30 feet and one additional shrub every six feet may be planted in lieu of providing the fence or wall.</p>				

Need more information?

Have a question regarding required permits, the permit process, or application requirements? Call 703-787-7380 or e-mail community.development@herndon-va.gov to make an appointment to see a member of the Department of Community Development.

Have a question regarding Building Permits or construction codes? Call 703-435-6850 or e-mail buildinginspections@herndon-va.gov to make an appointment to see the Building Official.

Visit the Planning and Zoning page on the Town's web site, www.herndon-va.gov to view the Department of Community Development web site for the Zoning Ordinance User Guide series or to access the town code. Town offices are located at the Herndon Municipal Center at 777 Lynn Street, Herndon, Virginia, 20170.

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